

Message Text

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ORIGIN PA-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 SAM-01 ARA-10 EA-10

EUR-12 RSC-01 /072 R

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: TEXT OF KISSINGER INTERVIEW

1. HERewith PARTIAL TRANSCRIPT OF JAMES RESTON INTERVIEW
WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER AS PUBLISHED IN NEW YORK TIMES
OF OCTOBER 13.

2. RESTON: YOU HAVE BEEN SOUNDING RATHER PESSIMISTIC IN
THE LAST FEW WEEKS. ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT THE STATE OF THE
WEST?

3. KISSINGER: I DON'T MEAN TO SOUND PESSIMISTIC. I THINK
THAT THERE ARE HUGE PROBLEMS BEFORE US, AND I'M TRYING TO
FINE THEM. I BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEMS ARE SOLUBLE, BUT
THEY REQUIRE A MAJOR EFFORT AND, IN SOME AREAS, NEW AP-
PROACHES, BUT I'M NOT PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE ABILITY TO
SOLVE THEM. WE HAVE --

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4. Q. COULD I INTERRUPT THERE TO SAY THAT IN READING WHAT YOU HAVE WRITTEN IN THE PAST, I HAVE A SENSE OF PESSIMISM IN YOUR WRITINGS, EVEN OF TRAGEDY. DO YOU REGARD YOUR THOUGHT AS BEING ESSENTIALLY TRAGIC, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE LAST TWO GENERATIONS?

5. A. I THINK OF MYSELF AS A HISTORIAN MORE THAN AS A STATESMAN. AS A HISTORIAN, YOU HAVE TO BE CONSCIOUS

OF THE FACT THAT EVERY CIVILIZATION THAT HAS EVER EXISTED HAS ULTIMATELY COLLAPSED.

6. HISTORY IS A TALE OF EFFORTS THAT FAILED, OF ASPIRATIONS THAT WEREN'T REALIZED, OF WISHES THAT WERE FULFILLED AND THEN TURNED OUT TO BE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT ONE EXPECTED. SO, AS A HISTORIAN, ONE HAS TO LIVE WITH A SENSE OF THE INEVITABILITY OF TRAGEDY. AS A STATESMAN, ONE HAS TO ACT ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT PROBLEMS MUST BE SOLVED.

7. EACH GENERATION LIVES IN TIME, AND EVEN THOUGH ULTIMATELY PERHAPS SOCIETIES HAVE ALL SUFFERED A DECLINE, THAT IS OF NO HELP TO ANY ONE GENERATION, AND THE DECLINE IS USUALLY TRACEABLE TO A LOSS OF CREATIVITY AND INSPIRATION AND THEREFORE AVOIDABLE.

8. IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT INsofar AS I THINK HISTORICALLY I MUST LOOK AT THE TRAGEDIES THAT HAVE OCCURRED. INsofar AS I ACT, MY MOTIVE FORCE, OF WHICH I AM CONSCIOUS, IT IS TO TRY TO AVOID THEM.

9. Q. DON'T WE HAVE TO BRING THIS PROBLEM DOWN TO PRACTICAL POINTS, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE IDEALS OF A REPUBLIC AND WHAT CAN BE DONE? IS THERE A CONFLICT NOW IN AMERICA BETWEEN THE IDEALS OF FOREIGN POLICY THAT YOU SEE FOR THE ORDER OF THE WORLD AND WHAT CAN ACTUALLY BE DONE IN TERMS OF PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND IN ACTUAL VOTES IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES?

10. A. I THINK ALMOST EVERY NATION RIGHT NOW HAS THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING ITS DOMESTIC VIEW OF ITSELF WITH UNCLASSIFIED

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THE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM BECAUSE EVERY NATION HAS TO LIVE ON SO MANY LEVELS.

11. CERTAINLY IN EVERY NON-COMMUNIST NATION -- AND PROBABLY EVEN IN COMMUNIST NATIONS -- PUBLIC OPINION IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT. BUT WHAT PUBLIC OPINION IS CONSCIOUS OF ARE THE DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEMS OF LIFE. THE REMOTER ISSUES, GEOGRAPHICALLY

AND IN TIME, DO NOT IMPINGE ON THE AVERAGE CITIZEN.

12. IN FOREIGN POLICY, THE MOST DIFFICULT ISSUES ARE THOSE WHOSE NECESSITY YOU CANNOT PROVE WHEN THE DECISIONS ARE MADE. YOU ACT ON THE BASIS OF AN ASSESSMENT THAT IN THE NATURE OF THINGS IS A GUESS, SO THAT PUBLIC OPINION KNOWS, USUALLY, ONLY WHEN IT IS TOO LATE TO ACT, WHEN SOME CATASTROPHE HAS BECOME OVERWHELMING.

13. THE NECESSITY OF THE MEASURES ONE TAKES TO AVOID THE CATASTROPHE CAN ALMOST NEVER BE PROVED. FOR THAT REASON YOU REQUIRE A GREAT DEAL, OR AT LEAST A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONFIDENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND THAT BECOMES DIFFICULT IN ALL SOCIETIES.

14. BUT, SPEAKING OF THE UNITED STATES, IF ONE LOOKS AT THE CRISIS THROUGH WHICH AMERICA HAS GONE OVER THE LAST DECADE -- THE ASSASSINATIONS, THE VIETNAM WAR, WATERGATE -- IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH THE RELATIONSHIP OF CONFIDENCE.

15. THEN THE UNITED STATES ALSO HAS PARTICULAR PROBLEMS IN TERMS OF ITS HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE. WE NEVER HAD TO FACE THE PROBLEM OF SECURITY UNTIL THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, SO WE COULD AFFORD TO BE VERY IDEALISTIC AND INSIST ON THE PURE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR MAXIMS.

16. TO THE AVERAGE COUNTRIES THAT WERE LESS FAVORED, THE PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN POLICY HAVE USUALLY APPEARED IN A MUCH MORE COMPLICATED FORM; THAT IS, THEIR MORALITY COULD NOT BE EXPRESSED IN ABSOLUTE TERMS. THEIR MORALITY HAD TO GIVE THE SENSE OF INWARD SECURITY NECESSARY TO ACT STEP
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BY STEP IN LESS THAN PERFECT MODES.

17. WE ARE NOW IN A SIMILAR POSITION AND THEREFORE THERE IS AN ALMOST INSTINCTIVE REBELLION IN AMERICA AGAINST THE PRAGMATIC ASPECT OF FOREIGN POLICY THAT IS SECURITY-ORIENTED, THAT ACHIEVES FINITE OBJECTIVES, THAT SEEKS TO SETTLE FOR THE BEST ATTAINABLE, RATHER THAN FOR THE BEST. IN THIS SENSE, WE ARE HAVING DOMESTIC PROBLEMS.

18. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE IS A STRAIN IN AMERICA WHICH IS CURIOUSLY EXTREMELY RELEVANT TO THIS WORLD. WE ARE CHALLENGED BY THE HUGE PROBLEMS, PEACE AND WAR, ENERGY, FOOD, AND WE HAVE A REAL BELIEF IN INTERDEPENDENCE -- IT IS NOT JUST A SLOGAN.

19. THE SOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS REALLY COMES QUITE NATURALLY TO AMERICANS, FIRST, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THAT EVERY PROBLEM IS SOLUBLE; SECONDLY, BECAUSE THEY ARE AT EASE WITH REDOING THE WORLD, AND THE OLD FRONTIER MENTALITY REALLY DOES FIND AN EXPRESSION, AND EVEN THE OLD IDEALISM FINDS A WAY TO EXPRESS ITSELF.

20. IN WHAT OTHER COUNTRY COULD A LEADER SAY, "WE ARE GOING TO SOLVE ENERGY; WE'RE GOING TO SOLVE FOOD; WE'RE GOING T

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974STATE227101
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: FWISNER
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740293-1135
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741042/aaaabjne.tel
Line Count: 171
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN PA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: martinjw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAR 2002 by chappeld>; APPROVED <06 FEB 2003 by martinjw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TEXT OF KISSINGER INTERVIEW
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, US, (KISSINGER, HENRY A), (RESTON, JAMES)
To: ALL POSTS NOUAKCHOTT
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005